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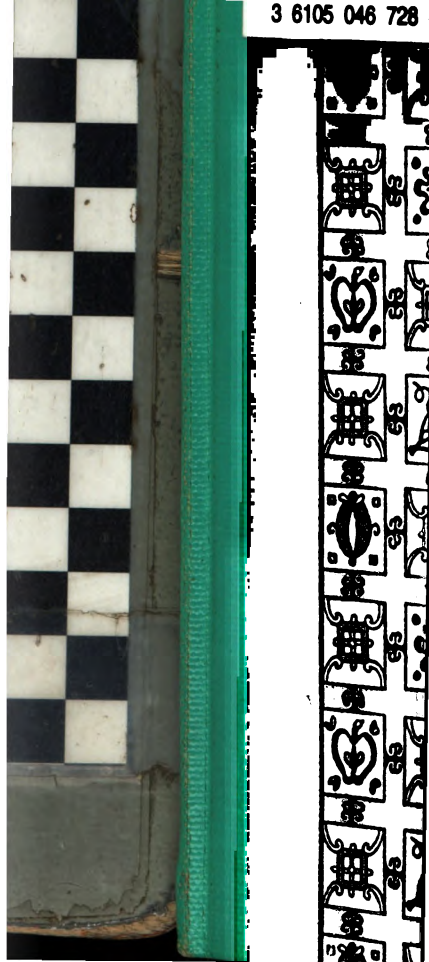
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Reflections from

the **M**irror of a

Mystic § § § §

translated from the Works

of John Rūsbröck by

Rygsbröck
=

- - Earle Baillie - -

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Florence, Florentine Thypographical Society, 33, S. Gallo Street, 1905.

“ The understanding of a contemplative man is,
“ as it were, a living mirror upon which the Father
“ and the Son pour forth this Spirit of Truth. ”

RÜSBRÖCK.

PREFACE.

The following gleanings from the works of Rüsbröck, are taken from Ernest Hello's "*Oeuvres Choies de Rosbrock*", with the exception of the paragraphs marked 1, 2, 3, in the chapter on Contemplation which have been translated from the Latin text of Surius. The works themselves written in old Flemish are so very obscure, partly from the nature of the subject, and partly owing to peculiarities of style that to render them literally into English would be a task difficult to the translator, and little profitable to the general reader. That Hello has succeeded however, in faithfully reproducing some of

the choicest thoughts of the great Mystic we have the authority of a distinguished author, well acquainted with the originals, who pronounces the “Oeuvres Choiesies” to be an admirable anthology¹ and to this I have adhered.

These thoughts, representing as they do a mystical experience which however fruitful as a subject of admiration, is, from its nature, incapable of imitation, contain likewise lessons of piety suitable to every state and condition of life. Thus Surius in his Preface says that, “no one is so perverse or devoid of grace, as to read Rüsbröck without being stirred by a salutary compunction, while no one has arrived at such heights as not to find in Rüsbröck the secret of something higher”. If a ray from these sun-lit heights reflected albeit faintly in these pages, shall

¹ MAETERLINCK. Introduction to “Les ornements des Noces Spirituelles”.

have power to cheer and encourage some toiler in the plains below, this little work will have fulfilled its mission.

It only remains to observe that if in the endeavour to express conceptions which transcend the power of language, R  sbr  ck in common with other Catholic Mystics, occasionally uses expressions more or less inexact from a theological or philosophical point of view (such are "beatitude", "naked vision" "super-essence" etc.), these must be interpreted according to the context and in harmony with the general teaching of the author, subject, as he intended it to be, to that of the Church. — Hence, to prevent his being misled by these and similar expressions, the reader will do well to bear in mind that the immediate union of the soul with God upon which R  sbr  ck insists, is a union effected by love, different not only in degree but also in kind from the Beatific Vision which is received chiefly in the intellect.

The former only is possible in this life; although it reacts upon the intellect, it produces only a confused apprehension which, far from satisfying its desire for truth, excites it and thus serves to prepare the soul for the latter which constitutes the essential reward of the Blessed in the life to come.

E. BAILLIE.

Fiesole.

INTRODUCTION.

Rüsbröck, surnamed the Admirable, was born in Belgium in the year 1293. At the age of eleven he was sent to live with an aged relative, a Priest, who taught him the rudiments of Grammar; but the science of the saints was the only learning for which he showed any aptitude. He acquired the amount of Latin necessary for his ordination to the priest-hood, but his knowledge of the language was so imperfect that he was never able to write in it. On this subject Denis the Carthusian says "I call him the Divine Doctor; he had no teacher

but the Holy Ghost. He was ignorant and illiterate; Peter and John were the same. Rüsbröck has written works in the vulgar tongue, so profound as to be beyond praise. His authority I believe to be that of a man to whom the Holy Ghost has revealed His secrets"; and Surius who collated the different manuscripts and translated the verified text into Latin says in his preface: "His every word is a work of salvation; it is God alone who speaks".

The rare grace of contemplation which attended him from childhood was united with a profound humility which made him ever seek to annihilate himself with his Divine Master. He lived in Brussels, silent, forgetful of self, intent upon divine things; gladly avoiding the busy crowd but always ready for works of mercy.

Rüsbröck was simple as a child and full of compassion for all sufferings, whether those of his fellow men or of the animal

creation, and many anecdotes are recorded of his tender solicitude for the wants of the lower animals.

The grace of God shone in his countenance and those who knew him declared the charm of his address to have been such that none left his presence unconsolated.

Until the age of sixty Rüsbröck's life was that of a secular priest; he then left the world and retired with a few companions to the Monastery of the Green Valley, on the outskirts of the forest of Soignies near Brussels. There he gave himself up to contemplation and committed his experiences to writing as he felt inspired to do so. When the divine impulse was wanting he forbore to write; and such was his fidelity to this practise that on his death bed he testified to having never written a line in the absence of the Holy Spirit.

An anecdote will illustrate his manner of life during this period. Having retired

one day according to his wont, to pray in the depths of the forest, he was rapt in extasy, which on this occasion lasted longer than usual. The Brethren became anxious and dispersed in all directions to look for him. At length one among them who was united to Rüsbröck by a special tie of friendship, saw in the distance a tree bathed in light. When he got near he saw the tree surrounded by fire, like a fortress surrounded by a moat; under it Rüsbröck was seated, but not yet come to himself he seemed like one intoxicated.

A vast number of pilgrims of both sexes came to visit him, of every age and condition, anxious to consult him upon their various needs. He received them all readily, and answered their questions and difficulties with as little hesitation as though he had given the fullest consideration to each.

Among others, some Priests from Paris

presented themselves, desirous of consulting him on the state of their souls, but his only answer was "you are as holy as you desire to be". Not understanding what he meant they were scandalized and complained bitterly of their disappointment. "Is he making game of us?" they said; "or did we come all the way from Paris to hear such nonsense as this?". Rüsbröck hearing of their annoyance sent for them and said: "My very dear children, say if I have deceived you? I said that your holiness was that which you desired it to be; in other words that it is proportioned to your good-will. Enter into yourselves, examine your good-will and you will have the measure of your state". With this the pilgrims changed their estimate, and returned home fortified and consoled.

Thauler the great Dominican Mystic from a pilgrim became a disciple, and one of Rüsbröck's most enthusiastic admirers; but

although much more learned than his master Thauler never equalled him in the order of mystical theology.

Far from exempting himself from the active duties of life, Rüsbröck was ever the first to give example to his brethren by embracing the rudest offices of the monastery. At the age of eighty-eight his strength began to fail and his mother, who had died in a Religious House many years before, appeared to him in a vision and told him of his approaching end. He received the tidings with a calm and holy joy, and falling ill of fever and dysentery, passed away a fortnight later without suffering of mind or body, on the 3rd December 1381.

Death left no mark on his countenance, and five years later his body was found incorrupt, exhaling an odour of exquisite sweetness. After being exposed to view for three days the holy remains were interred,

by order of the Bishop, in the church belonging to the Monastery of the Green Valley where the last twenty-eight years of his life had been spent.

I.

THE FIRST STEP TO CONTEMPLATION.

When the soul has arrived at true life, and all her actions are referred to the glory of GOD, she feels herself suddenly stirred by a desire to see what her Spouse is like, asking Who and What is He who has become Man for her sake? He who has died to save her, and has given Himself to her? This Jesus Who on leaving the earth has left her His Sacraments and promised her His Kingdom; this Jesus, ever ready to provide for the needs of the body and the consolation of the soul, What is He like? And the soul, full of questions, feels the desire of seeing her Spouse increase within

her; the longing to know what He is like, what He is in Himself; for the knowledge, such as it is, which she gathers from creatures does not content her.

Then the soul does like Zaccheus the publican, who wanted to see; she goes on in front, far from the crowd, from the multitude of creatures, which keep us low, and prevent the getting sight of Christ. She mounts the tree of faith which has its root in GOD, and spreads into twelve branches¹. The lower extend towards the Humanity of Jesus, and the world's salvation; the upper tell of the Divinity, the Trinity, the Unity. — The soul mounts like Zaccheus to the top of the tree; for Christ is going to pass by with all His gifts. Reaching the summit she sees the Son of Man; but the light says to her "Behold the Divinity, infinite, incomprehensible,

¹ The twelve articles of the *Creed*.

inaccessible; and all created light stops short. This is the Abyss! — and the soul reaches the highest knowledge of GOD which can be procured here below; viz. ignorance and the confession that she understands not.

But in the midst of the light, in the midst of the desire, Christ speaks, saying: Come down quickly; today I must take up my abode in thy house.

This rapid descent which GOD requires of us is simply an immersion in the abyss of the Divinity, incomprehensible to the intellect; but where the intellect stops short, love advances and goes in.

When the soul, having gone beyond the understanding stoops and leaps down, she dwells in GOD, and Jesus Christ in her; when having gone down into the depths inaccessible to created things, she walks in the light of faith, she goes forth to meet Jesus, and, bathed in His splendour, she sees how impossible it is for her to understand.

Whensoever desire plunges us in the incomprehensible GOD we go to meet Christ, who fills us with His gifts; and when above His gifts, above ourselves and all creatures, we repose in Him, we dwell in GOD and GOD in us.

This is how Jesus and the soul meet at the highest point of the active life.

II.

THE ROYAL ROAD.

Which is the road that we may go forth to meet the LORD? the road of the most perfect resemblance and most blissful union? Every good act however small, provided it be referred to GOD by simplicity of intention, augments in us the divine likeness and replenishes us with eternal life.

Simplicity of intention collects the dispersed powers of the soul into unity of spirit, and unites the spirit itself to GOD. It is simplicity of intention which honours and praises GOD, which offers and presents our virtues to Him; thus entering into and overstepping itself and all creatures, the soul

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finds GOD in its own depths. Simplicity is the beginning and end of all virtues, their splendour and their glory.

I call a simple intention, that which aims at GOD alone, referring all things to Him, conformably with order and truth. It puts to flight all pretence, hypocrisy, duplicity; in every possible action simplicity should be chiefly aimed at, practised and cultivated. This places man in the presence of GOD and gives him light and courage. This sets him free from all vain and servile fear, now and at the Day of Judgment. It is that single eye of which the LORD speaks, as giving light to the whole body; that is, to the whole vital energy, which it delivers from evil. It is the interior inclination of the enlightened spirit: the foundation of the whole spiritual life.

Full of trust in GOD and faithful to Him it folds hope and charity in its embrace. It treads corrupt nature under foot, gives

peace, and stills the useless disquietudes which arise within us; it is rest, hope and confidence, now and at the last day. By means of it we shall persevere in unity of spirit. Adorned with grace, and the divine resemblance, we shall go to meet the LORD by the path of the virtues. For this simplicity of intention will offer to Him our whole vital energy, increasing in us from hour to hour the divine likeness. All the life of spirits, all their energy, all their virtue consists, along with the divine likeness, in simplicity of intention; and they reach their supreme repose above, in simplicity also, i. e. in simplicity of essence.

Spirits possess virtue and the divine likeness in divers degrees; and in divers degrees, according to their dignity they possess their own essence in the depth of their own being: but GOD suffices for all, and all for each; and every spirit, according to the measure of its love, has a manner more or

less profound of seeking GOD in its own depth.

To enjoy GOD without intermediary: this is what the spirit longs for, naturally, and supernaturally, with a supreme desire. But even if the divine union be effected without medium, we must understand that GOD and the creature can never be confounded; union can never become confusion; the distinction remains for ever inviolable.

III.

OF CONTEMPLATION.

GOD is eternal, uncreated, His own absolute beatitude, and that of others: the superessential Essence hidden under all Being; the beatitude of the blessed; the first object of Spirits raised to the degree of nudity.

GOD is by His nature the Supreme Peace. To know, to love, to will, such is His action, and His action is His Substance. For Him there is neither past nor future; all is present, open and bare.

Essential peace, activity of nature, absolute repose and the plenitude of fruitfulness; this is the dignity for which He has created

men and angels. His gift is His Kingdom and His Kingdom is Himself; and He belongs to us if we live only for Him.

Heaven and earth and all creatures exist for us. He has given us reason, and above reason the liberty of the naked spirit, divested of clothing and images, which with a simple view, is able to contemplate the face of the Father, in some sort as the angels who minister to us. This is the contemplative life, offered to free human beings; to such as live to GOD alone; He living in them and they in Him.

The understanding of a contemplative man is as it were, a living mirror on which the Father and the Son pour forth their Spirit of truth; that the reason may be illuminated, and may know all truth, as far as it can be understood by images, modes forms and similitudes.

1. According to the mode of a creature in a created light, reason attentively explores

many things, and recreates itself in the acts and effects which proceed forth from the Infinite Godhead. Looking into itself and other creatures, it easily perceives that there is a cause from which all things depend and flow forth, and in that cause it desires to rest for ever.

It gathers from created things, and observes the power, wisdom, goodness and riches of the first Cause. It beholds also the distinction of Persons in the Trinity etc. All these things illuminated¹ reason considers in the infinite Godhead. They are indeed rational or intellectual images, extracted after the manner of a creature from the simple Essence or notion of GOD; but because they all begin and terminate in that endless essence which is an abyss, reason and consideration fail; for this is the simple Nature of GOD.

¹ Illuminated by faith.

2. To that mode by which the face of God is seen above and without reason, neither reason nor consideration can reach; the simple eye beholds, in the divine light with simple gaze and look, whatever God is. The intellectual eye follows the gaze, desiring to explore and have experience in the same light; but at the sight of God, reason, with all that is distinct, succumbs and fails. It sees something, but what? It cannot tell; for the faculty of understanding is lifted up into a kind of knowledge without mode or form of any kind. For that which is without mode has surrounded the whole power of the understanding, so that it hardly knows where it is. What it beholds it cannot come up to or apprehend, its view having no mode on which to fix; and spreading slowly and far, it wanders away without end and without return.

This mode which has no mode, exercised after this fashion, stands midway between

the contemplation by intellectual images and similitudes, and that highest contemplation which is made above all images by the divine light.

3. In this latter manifestation of God the reason of the soul is like the eye of the bat which becomes blind in the light of the sun; but the spirit flaming with love, and the living energy of the soul cleaving to God without intermission here begins. Deservedly is the soul then likened to the eagle, gazing with unmoved pupil on the rays of the sun; for so does the simple eye of the loving spirit receive, without medium and above reason, the irradiation of the Divine Glory.

During the rapture the spirit can, if God so pleases, behold all creatures in a single ray, their action and eternal destiny.

It contemplates without astonishment; wonder is beneath it; contemplation has no experience of it.

The rational soul, created by GOD, below herself is sensitive, within herself rational, above herself spiritual. These three are but one life according to nature; but if we would exercise the sublimest mode of living that may be attained in this life, the spirit must be divided from the soul, and by a naked view, in the divine light, rising above reason, above images, above the exercise of the virtues, must look upwards, within, and cleave to GOD with a naked love by which, in naked charity, it may freely ascend the infinite endless heights of GOD.

This is the first movement of the spirit, casting itself on the mountain without summit in the freedom of naked love. The second movement tends downwards; it casts us into such a depth of self abasement that we descend below all humanity; below all the degrees of humility which are incapable of satisfying us; and plunging into an interior look, sink down into the unfathom-

able depth of GOD below which there is nothing. There, in the humility of the abyss, we form a kingdom where He lives, and dwells in us, and we with Him, lower than the worlds.

This second movement of the spirit is that of abnegation in the interminable, infinite depths of GOD. By means of these two movements the spirit separates itself from the soul.

Nevertheless the soul and spirit are not two distinct substances; they live by one and the same life. But the soul dwells in grace, in measure, in the exercise of the virtues, while the spirit is united to GOD above reason and virtue, in the naked love which has lost all account of forms and images.

No one can teach the contemplative life to another, but the eternal Truth, manifesting itself in the spirit, teaches all that is necessary.

He who would experience the divine

union must live altogether in GOD, in such a manner as to satisfy his superior instinct in all its energy interior and exterior. Love must transport him to the mountain where the creature dies in GOD; where she dies to herself and to all she calls her own; where she submits herself implicitly with all her powers to the transforming action of the incomprehensible Truth, which is GOD. The act of life must drive man outwardly to the practice of the virtues; the act of death must drive him into GOD, in the depth of his own being. These are the two movements of the perfect life, united as matter and form, as soul and body.

Man applies himself to GOD by the lifting up of all his powers, by purity of intention, by the ardent longing of his heart, by a ceaseless craving, by the courageous energy of his spirit and nature. When he has given himself up to this exercise,

in the presence of the Divine Majesty, love becomes his teacher. The power of love spares him in nothing: love directs his every movement, and leaves him after each movement so directed, greater, nobler, more filled with energy and more productive.

IV.

GOD AND THE SOUL.

Those who are in the habit of contemplation find within themselves something like a vast wilderness; for our essence is an immense solitude where GOD lives and reigns. Now we are condemned to wander in this desert, unless love bears us up above ourselves into the bosom of GOD.

The immense riches which GOD has by nature may become ours by the power of love, by His abode in us, by ours in Him; by the grace of the Holy Spirit which satisfies every desire. It is by virtue of this immense love that we possess the joy of dying to ourselves and getting out of

our prison; melted as we are in the ocean of being, and in the burning darkness. It is then that the spirit, in the embrace of the Trinity, dwells in the superessence, acts and enjoys.

The Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, bearing all creation. The personal relations of Father and Son coexist in the fruitful unity of the Divine Nature.

Eternal activity without beginning or end, Cause without Cause, the Father contemplates Himself in the abyss of His fecundity, and in the act of understanding Himself begets another Person, the Son, His Eternal Word. The types of all creatures not yet drawn from nothingness, dwelt eternally in the Eternal Begotten. GOD sees and contemplates them there in their types, but in Himself; for there is nothing in GOD which is not GOD. This eternal existence which our types possess in GOD, this eternal being, is GOD; it endures eternally.

GOD contemplates Himself in an eternal *now* without before or after. The Wisdom of GOD is the Splendour of the Father, and the eternal type of beings, according to which they were designed on the day of their creation.

GOD sees Himself and all thing in His Word as in a mirror. The Blessed Trinity created us after His image, according to the eternal pattern which existed in His bosom, before the world was. This is why GOD wills that, delivered from ourselves and brought into the eternal light, we should stretch forth our arms towards the divine type which is ours; our pattern, the very reason of our existence; and that we should possess it in eternal action and eternal joy.

The bosom of the Father is the Source of being; the splendour of the Father is the generation of the Son; every type is manifest to the vision of the Father. The

Father gives to the Son all that He has, and is, except the relation of Father, which is proper to Himself and eternally incommunicable. All that is hidden in the Father comes to light in the generation of the Son. Our type dwells eternally in the sacred shadow, but an infinite light reveals and manifests us in God. Now the act of contemplation is the tending of him who contemplates towards his eternal type.

Flying from brightness to brightness he aspires with outstretched arms to reach this immortal pattern according to which he was created. He raises himself that he may attain to his model. Now this contemplation is of sublime fruitfulness. This possession of himself, this absolute liberty, opens up an unlooked for horizon to the man eager after perfection.

Man dwells in himself, active and free, in the full exercise of the virtues, but contemplation has an exterior act higher than

all virtue and all devotion; it is the act by which it possesses itself.

Superessential contemplation possesses in a manner, the crown to which it aspires. Were we free from our wretchedness it is evident that, being more apt to receive the light in our created substance, we should be illuminated through and through by the glory of God with a liberality of which we form no conception. The transcendent measure which surpasses all measure, is the only one which the spirit knows, when having come out of himself, man goes forth by the power of transforming light into the domain of eternal contemplation.

When love has allowed itself to be rapt above its created substance by transcendent joy, it finds and tastes upon the mountain the splendour and delights which God causes to flow into the inner sanctuaries of life, impressing upon the ravished soul a certain image of His own Majesty.

V.

THE TWO CHERUBIM.

The Cherubim, with out-stretched wings, placed on either side of the Propitiatory, looking at it and one another, were two figures of gold. This gold teaches us the high nobility of the soul devoted to GOD, and divested of all spirit of appropriation.

The first Cherub represents rapture of the spirit; the contemplation which plunges with unerring gaze into the divine light: the second, eternal fruition immersed in Him Who is without name, without vesture and without form. Lo ! here is true gold ; here are charity and wisdom. They are present, on the right and on the left, to the same

act, for they are inseparable in their burning activity. In spite of the embrace of unity they keep their distinctness.

They are the assistants of the divine mercy; their wings are stretched, for they are borne up into the heights of vision; they cover the place called the Oraculum, for they protect the secret inspirations of the soul, and it is in their shadow that GOD speaks to and answers us.

Simple contemplation plunging into the divine light, and simple fruition rejoicing in its object, look at and face one another; for one dwells with the other. Their faces are turned towards the Propitiatory; that is, towards love in fruition.

Love in fruition soars above love in action, but the former, far from depriving the latter of its activity, excites and drives it on to an ever increasing practical fruitfulness. Thus the powers are perfected one by the other. The higher a man is raised

above himself in sublime love and fruition, the more fruitful will be he in himself, by the power of his activity.

Between these two Cherubim, between contemplation and fruition, is the abode of GOD in the soul; thence flow grace and wisdom; there we become acquainted with the will of the LORD.

VI.

SOLITUDE.

Whoever wishes to live in interior solitude, let him go and dwell in Jerusalem. Now Jerusalem means the place of peace. Solitude is above all, an act of the interior.

Conversion requires of the imperfect that they should avoid this or that exterior act; for what we possess with attachment adheres to us, and mingles with our life; but the perfect man no longer requires to fly from outward things. Disengaged from attachments, free and ready, his interior movement towards GOD is so prompt that it is no effort to him to cast himself into the depth within. If he occasionally finds himself

inclining towards useless objects (for perpetual attention to divine things is not given to man in this life) he speedily turns away with immense contempt of himself and of his own instability. But as he was stooping without attachment he raises himself without effort, for his interior attraction is stronger than the exterior one; he is more inclined to what is within than to what is without. There are some who have a special aptitude for stability, but this does not show their holiness to be greater. The holiest is he who loves most; he who looks most earnestly towards GOD, and complies most fully with the exigencies of this look.

Sometimes the most unstable, and stubborn natures arrive at heights which the quiet never reach; for the unstable in the extasy of their love, despise themselves to such a degree that they can no longer endure themselves.

What is needed is solitude of heart and

spirit. Without this were you alone in the world you would not be a solitary; with it you would be a solitary amid the densest crowd.

The just man is he who possesses God in very truth, and he lives in the depths of solitude, no matter where or with whom he may be. He lives in the market-place as if it were a church or a cell. This is why Jesus told the woman at the well, that the time was come to adore the Father in spirit and in truth; for what is it to adore the Father in spirit and in truth, if not to cleave to Him by love? He who truly loves, does not limit his possession of God to certain conditions of place or companionship; he finds his Lord within himself. The Lord is closer to us than we are to ourselves, the Preserver of our life, the Essence of our essence. He who possesses, sees and loves God only and all things with reference to God, is secure against

multiplicity and against differences of places and persons. He deifies multiplicity instead of being drawn away by it from unity. He finds GOD in everything, in every place, in every act. It is GOD who acts with him; and he who is the cause of the act is the chief actor. If your love be true; if in all your actions you seek GOD only, He is the chief author of your actions. No one can love GOD without GOD, nor surpass the bounds of nature by the mere strength of nature. Self abnegation is a work above nature. None can prevent him who seeks and tastes GOD in all things, from being a solitary, amid all multitudes and multiplicities whatsoever. The divine union accompanies solitude, for the just man lives in a state of inviolable recollection; and even as all the multiplicities of the world cannot disturb GOD, so it is, in due proportion, with the soul which is united to Him; but the supreme height whither

disturbance cannot reach, is above the powers of the soul; it is found in GOD, in whom all multiplicity is virtually present in the supreme peace of absolute unity. We must therefore see GOD alone in all things, and accustom our souls to His interior presence.

Think of those moments when you possessed GOD in the church or in your own room, and hold yourself towards persons and things in the same interior state. Such as you wish to be in the sanctuary in the fervour of prayer, be the same among people and external things. If you have become entangled in any attachment you will find the noxious image return in time of prayer. I do not say that all actions, places and people are of equal influence; this would be false; prayer is better than bathing, the church than the market-place. I only mean that the same spirit should accompany a spiritual man everywhere.

If this happiness be yours, the presence of God within you is invincible; if you have it not, but are obliged to seek it on the right or on the left, every distraction, every fresh occurrence and uncongenial companion will be dangerous to you. If God be not in the centre of your soul in spirit and in truth, if you have any inordinate attachment of self-love, not alone bad company or the market-place will be hurtful to you; you will find your enemy at prayer, and in the sanctuary, for you bear him within you. Every attachment is a hindrance, and if you would find God everywhere you must everywhere seek Him alone.

It is not enough to think of God, for thought will turn elsewhere, and then God will be absent. You must have God established in your essence, in the depth where thoughts do not reach. He possesses God thus who having risen above himself by the power of love, finds the Lord above

considerations and the powers of the mind. Such a one will find in himself a simple propension of love tending towards GOD, whatever creatures may do. This is the single eye directed to GOD, passing beyond images.

GOD dwells in the powers of the soul by His grace, but in the essence of the spirit united to Him without medium, there is a presence of GOD special and ineffable.

He who thus possesses GOD possesses Him after a divine fashion; to him GOD shines forth in everything. He who refers all things to His glory, will taste in all the sweet savour of GOD. If you have this solitude of the spirit, you will penetrate persons and things to such a depth, that they will lose their power to harm you.

Our love must increase in weight till it carries us down through all creatures, and never rests until it has found GOD in the abyss; God alone!

VII.

THE ESCAPE.

Temperance of body and soul produces chastity : there is no chastity without temperance. Chastity is the escape of the creature from the creature, that it may belong to GOD alone.

Created things exist for our use ; GOD for our enjoyment. Chastity is an adhesion to GOD above intelligence and feeling ; above all gifts which the soul is capable of receiving. It rises at one leap, above all that feeling, experience, or intelligence can apprehend, and reposes in GOD alone above all His gifts.

Chastity is the splendour of the interior

man; the power which closes the soul against the things of earth, and opens it to those of Heaven. Chastity requires us to be armed with the weapons of Jesus, the Redeemer and Conqueror. It requires that His Name be the joy of our hearts; that we bear in our souls the resemblance of His life; the remembrance of His Birth, His teaching, the benefits He has conferred upon us; His humility, His Passion, His Blood poured forth; His glorious Resurrection and joyful Ascension. Thus we must follow Him and kneel in spirit before the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. All strange phantoms, useless and unwholesome will die in this atmosphere.

If we bear about with us the GOD-man crucified, His life and His death, He will live in us and we shall live in him; flesh and blood, the world and hell will be under our feet. Without neglecting sensible images of Jesus Christ, we must plunge into that

interior wisdom where intellectual images dwell. There truth and justice will enlighten our spirit, and we shall shine brightly in the presence of God. The simple gaze must plunge and lose itself in the light devoid of images in which the divinity of Jesus Christ crowns the splendour of chastity; and in the Beatific Vision Jesus will clothe us with the robe of purity which is Himself.

VIII.

THE REPOSE OF THE ABYSS NOT A STATE
OF INACTION. EXCELLENCE OF DESIRES.

There arises in the contemplative life one temptation more dangerous perhaps than any other, so utterly does it separate the soul from GOD and from all virtue.

It attacks those who think to find within themselves a participation in the Divine Essence by means of intellect alone. Neglecting all activity, exterior and interior, these persons fall into a blind and useless repose, the result of natural and spiritual idleness.

Will, knowledge, love, desire, effective co-operation of man with GOD they despise

and neglect, through false liberty of spirit, to adhere, without love and without virtue to a false repose which they find in their own interior. But this tranquillity is simple forgetfulness of GOD, themselves and their neighbour, the very opposite of that divine peace, the repose of the abyss, that marvellous peace full of activity, of love, of desire, which is sought the more ardently the more it is found. The victims of this delusion are for the most part immortalized although some practise great austerities. Devoid of simple love and truth they rest in themselves by an idle sensuality. Not having the love which cleaves to GOD, by means of which they might penetrate themselves, they take their repose in their own essence, and by a horrible confusion they mistake it for the Essence of GOD, thus making a GOD or rather an idol of themselves.

For, know, that Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world, all the saints, all the

angels of every hierarchy act and will act eternally. With them activity is eternal, thanksgiving eternal, praise eternal, knowledge eternal: even in eternal life happiness would not exist without activity; God Himself would not be God, if He did not act, and happiness would have no existence for Him.

Interior consolation is of an inferior order to the act of love which renders service to the poor. Were you rapt in ecstasy like St. Peter or St. Paul, or whomsoever you will, and heard that some poor person was in want of a hot drink, or other assistance I should advise you to awake for a moment from your ecstasy to go to prepare the food. Leave GOD for GOD; find Him, serve Him in His members; you will lose nothing by the exchange. What you give up for love of Him, God will give you back with abundant interest.

All who are drawn by GOD produce acts

of virtue, living and fruitful, after the likeness of the Blessed Trinity, according to the measure of worth and dignity they have received.

“Blessed are the merciful,” says the Lord speaking of these, “for they shall obtain mercy.” They have had pity on themselves, because in their search after perfection their souls were in want of GOD: they have had pity on themselves because there was a danger that GOD might be wanting to the delights their love was looking forward to enjoy. These two mercies, along with the divine goodness have driven them on; they have pursued the mercy of GOD into the sanctuary of unending bliss and flowing far from themselves in the abyss of the Divinity, they have become the thrones of the Most High Trinity.

The angelic spirits who possess the Kingdom of GOD in this degree are called Thrones:

they possess the Lord and are possessed by Him. Placed between action and fruition they give themselves perfectly to each; and all who, by the goodness of God, attain to the same degree of activity in grace and glory are likewise thrones, and possess God in the blessed essential union. They belong to Him as His throne, His repose, His property. For the abyss is an ignorance which the intellectual act can neither attain nor comprehend. Christ prayed to the Father "that they may be one as We are One." He asked for the love that enjoys, and an immersion in the boundless darkness which absorbs and swallows up¹.

¹ The word beatitude is not used in the strict sense viz. that of the fruition of God in a future life, which according to theology differs in kind, as well as degree, from the highest state of mystical union experience in the body. As to the possible fruition of God in this life compare "Visions of B. Angela of Foligno Ch. XXVII" at the end of which she says.... "the" aforesaid unutterable manifestation of God is the same

Let us aspire, without intermission, towards the super-essential being; yet inclined towards the world below, by all practise, all truth, all activity, all justice; and we shall form our interior kingdom after the image and likeness of the Lord our God.

Torrents of grace and glory flow into every soul that desires according to the excellence of the desire; the ebb and flow of this ocean produces eternal thirst. Those who flow by desire into the boundless sea, feel the hunger, feel the thirst and taste unity. But a moderate desire insufficient to suspend the soul to the Divine Essence is a sad hindrance. The men of moderate desire

“ good which the saints possess in life eternal, nor is
“ this good other than the aforesaid but there is another kind of experience, and only different from the
“ aforesaid that the least saint, that possesseth least
“ thereof in life eternal, hath more than can be given
“ unto any soul in this present life, before the death of
“ the body ”.

do not receive the ray: they are not touched by the sublime ignorance which knows no human measure. They exist in themselves, and are not swallowed up here below by the gulf of beatitude.

IX.

THE CHALLENGE.

As the visible sun illuminates and fertilizes the earth, so the light of GOD, reigning in the summit of the soul, sheds rays of splendour upon all its powers.

The infinite Love, which is GOD, lighting up the purity of the spirit darts forth burning sparks whose touch enkindles the senses, the will, and all the powers of the soul; exciting in them a tempest of love, an extasy, an impatience, an ignorance. Now these sparks are arms with which we fight with the devouring love of the LORD whose attraction is all-absorbing. It is He who arms us with His gifts against Himself; He enlight-

ens our intelligence. He exhorts us to defend ourselves; He says "Fight with me."

If He endows us with knowledge and wisdom, if He attracts our powers into the abyss, if He excites within us a taste and a desire, if He grants us the contemplation and the ardent flames by which we mount above ourselves, if He touches our will, and causes our spirit to burn and melt in His presence, it is that we may defend against Him our right to love and fight for it with all our powers.

When the collisions of love bring two spirits face to face,¹ the spirit of God and our spirit, the struggle begins. Our spirit stoops, like one about to spring forward: it aims at God and is resolved to reach Him. This movement of love has for accomplice

¹ By the "Spirit of God" is not intended the Divine Spirit, but some communication of God in the order of grace.

the secret action of GOD who is aimed at. The encounter takes place in the depth. The combatants dart lightnings at each other which set on fire their burning energy, and the ardour of battle increases the avidity of their love. The spirit of GOD strikes; ours strikes back and the strength of love is born of this double movement.

This current and counter-current causes the fountains of love to recoil upon themselves; thus the contact of GOD and the vehemence of our desire meet, we know not where, in some unity. The spirit possessed and absorbed by love ends by remembering only its possessor. Plunging in the abyss of the assailant it recognizes that its desire and eagerness are unequal to the situation. Thus it assists its own overthrow, and gathering its strength together for a supreme effort, finds, in the depths of its activity, the power of transforming itself into love. Then the innermost sanctuary

of its created being, where the activity of nature begins and ends, is within its grasp, and it controls the multiform world of its virtues and powers.

Thus love enters into possession of itself; but its height becomes the foundation of new virtues and powers; for love and our spirit having met, we can no longer keep our higher powers at home within us. The incomprehensible brightness of GOD and an immense love which rules the spirit have touched the sensitive powers. Then the soul invited to return to the combat, rises up with a desire more eager than before. But the more interior and the more exalted the eagerness, the more quickly it consumes and exhausts itself in the act of love. One would have supposed it at the point of death, and behold it on fire for a fresh encounter; I call this life eternal! The spirit hungry and eager flies towards GOD as if to devour Him, but it falls instead into the gulf of the infi-

nite, and, defeated in the battle, mounts above to unite with the conqueror. For the higher powers embrace in the unity of the spirit.

Here love is in its essence, higher than its exercise. This is the source whence flows charity with all the virtues. The soul goes forth armed with charity and the virtues, and retires into herself eager to taste God: faithful in both movements to the simple impulse of love. Observe however that all this passes in a region inferior to the Divinity. It is the most sublime exercise which is found here below: but pure contemplation has loftier heights.

X.

THE SEQUEL.

Listen, ye who desire to live in the spirit: I speak to you not to others.

If you wish to rise to contemplation three things are necessary: — you must see and possess the unfathomable abyss of your substance: — your interior act must transcend the modes of being: — you must take up your abode in the joy of God.

When the Divine union becomes manifest to the spirit it is without measure and without mode. It is deep, high, boundless in length and breadth, and the spirit perceiving it feels itself plunged by

love into the bosom of the deep, raised to the height, carried to the length and breadth. It feels itself established in the unknown knowledge, flowing into unity, sinking, driven by death into the divine life and energy where it breathes with GOD. This is the foundation: now for the act, which is the second condition and follows from the first. I speak of an act superior to reason and freed from measure; for the Unity of GOD the possession of Whom is the beginning and end of contemplation, is for ever drawing the Divine Persons and all the spirits of love into itself; it calls, it compels, it invites.

Every spirit feels the attraction, more or less, according to the degree of its love and its activity. He who yields to it and perseveres cannot fall into mortal sin.

The contemplative who has renounced himself and all things, who is hindered by nothing, hampered by nothing, who

possesses nothing with appropriation ; he penetrates and buries himself, bare and void of images, in the innermost depth of his spirit. He sees the eternal sun arise and recognises in its rays the deep-felt influence of the divine attraction. He is no longer conscious of himself except as an immense conflagration sensible of its own heat. The more lovingly he considers the interior attraction the more he feels it : and the more he feels it the more he longs for the divine union. He longs to pay his debt ; the eternal demands of unity set his spirit on fire, and it burns everlastingly for it pays everlastingly. Perpetuity is the characteristic of love.

The spirit transformed in extasy by the power of unity burns in love ; yet if it looks at itself while thus burning it sees the abyss between itself and God. But there comes a moment in the midst of the conflagration, when simplicity throws a veil

over the abyss and the spirit sees nothing more; nothing but the pure unity : for the boundless love of GOD absorbs, drowns and consumes all that it holds in its embrace. Into this same unknown love we cast ourselves as homeless wanderers; and it will lead us about in the boundless breadth and we shall bathe in it, and flow far from ourselves in unknown delights, amid the treasures of the divine goodness; and we shall burn and melt, absorbed and lost in glory eternally and infinitely.

I take any image which comes to hand, in order to show the contemplative what he is and what he does; as for others they will not comprehend.

During the supreme conversion of the soul into its own depth there is nothing between the soul and GOD except the blinding of the spirit (thro' excess of light) and the energy of love. These are the agents by which the soul cleaves to GOD.

It is by them that in the words of St. Bernard, the “oueness” is made between man and God.

But above reason and love, man is suddenly rapt into the naked vision, towards the essential adoration. This is the mystery of unity as it is accomplished in the spirit. The essential adoration infinitely surpasses all intelligence. The ravished spirit bows before the infinity of GOD, and the Incomprehensible makes known to it that nothing has ever comprehended It, — not even the human soul of Jesus, which soars far above the union of saint or angel, in the glory, proper to Itself alone, of the Hypostatic Union ¹.

¹ See note at the end of Ch. VIII.

XI.

SAFE KEEPING

By safe keeping I mean the act by which a man delivers up his own will and all that belongs to him, to GOD, so as to be unable to will any more except as GOD wills. Our liberty is then given over to the divine liberty: we are free; GOD is free; we enclose our liberty in His. Whatever our manner of life may be and whatever Habit we wear, we must each become one of GOD's saints. As long as we prefer to look out for our own interest rather than trust ourselves wholly to GOD; as long as our will has fancies apart from the divine union, — caprices of "yes" and "no" — so

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long we remain in a state of childhood. We do not advance with giant steps, for the fire has not yet consumed all selfish love, all selfish fear of losing or of not gaining. When that is accomplished love is perfect, and the golden ring of our esponsals is wider than heaven and earth. This is the secret cellar into which Love conducts his chosen ones; this in the mystery of which the Spouse sings in the Canticles; it is here that charity and all the virtues are set in order. Here we have the exterior and the interior life; herein consists all practise, all truth, all justice.

It is the principle, the life, growth, nourishment and preservation of every virtue. Everything is in its right place; activity makes order everywhere, and yet Love dwells with the Beloved in the eternal cellar of wine, above reason, above measure, above its own exterior life.

Love suffices for itself; its burning thirst

finds on the altar the wine it longs for. Free from vain desire and deceitful concupiscences, it possesses GOD in its own interior abyss. Love in its ascent, without departing from order, loses the measure which checks it and finds intoxication. Love carries us away into the labyrinth known to itself alone; carries us away never to return. We never retrace our steps.

XII.

THE SECRET FRIEND AND THE MYSTICAL CHILD.

There exists a difference interior and unknown, between the secret friends of God and His mystical children.

Both classes walk uprightly before Him; but the friend possesses even his most interior virtues with a certain feeling of ownership, of its nature imperfect. Such persons choose and embrace their manner of adhering to God as the highest object of their powers and desires; but their spirit of appropriation is as a wall, preventing them from penetrating into the sacred nudity which is devoid of images.

They are full of representations of themselves and of their actions, and these pictures come between their souls and God. Although in the ardour of their love they feel the divine union, they perceive none the less, in the depth of their spirit, the impression of an obstacle and a distance. They have neither the notion nor the love of simple transport, ignorant of its own mode of being. So also their interior life, even in its best moments, is tied by reason and human standards. They may understand the powers of the intellect and distinguish well between them; but simple contemplation, dependent on divine light, is a secret to them.

They reach forward towards God in the ardour of love, but this imperfect spirit of appropriation prevents their kindling in the fire. Constant in serving God and in loving Him, they have not yet the desire of that sublime death which is the deiform

life. They undervalue exterior acts, and the mysterious peace which dwells in activity. They make interior consolations and imperfect sweetnesses the chief object of their desires, and thus they stop short on the way.

Great indeed is the distance between the secret friend and the mystical child! The first ascends rapidly, lovingly, with measured steps, the second goes on to die further up, in the simplicity which is ignorant of itself.

It is absolutely necessary to maintain interior love and exterior activity: then we shall await with joy the judgment of GOD, and the coming of Jesus Christ. But if in the exercise of our activity we die to ourselves and to all we call our own, then, transported above everything by the sublime excess of the spirit empty and bare, we shall assuredly realize in ourselves the perfection of the children of GOD, and experience the effusion of the Spirit without intermediary, for we shall be void of all things.

XIII.

THE LIVING BREAD.

Jesus has given us His Flesh to eat, and His Blood to drink: this is a thing unheard of which ought to fill us with wonder and amazement.

It is of the nature of love to be always giving and always receiving. Now the love of Jesus is exacting and generous. He gives all that He has and all that He is. All that we have, all that we are He takes. He asks more than of ourselves we are able to give. He has an immense hunger which desires to devour us wholly. He enters into the very marrow of our bones, and the more lovingly, by we allow

Him to do so the more fully we taste Him. But He consumes us without being satisfied; His hunger is boundless, insatiable. He well knows that we are poor, but He makes no account of it and spares us nothing. He Himself makes His own bread in us; first burning up vices, faults, sins, in His love, then when He sees us pure, He comes, like a bird of prey with mouth open ready to devour everything. He desires to consume our life in order to change it into His own. Ours full of vices, His full of grace and glory; all prepared for us, if we will but renounce ourselves. Now if our eyes were clear enough to behold this eager craving of Christ who hungers after our salvation, do what we would, we could not prevent ourselves from flying into His open mouth.

I seem to be talking absurdly, but they who love will understand me.

Now the love of Jesus is of noble nature; where He has consumed He desires also to

nourish, and when He has eaten us it is Himself He gives in return. He gives at the same time the appetite to enjoy; He makes the present of an eternal hunger and thirst. In this hunger and thirst He gives His Body and Blood for food. When we partake of them with interior devotion His Blood, full of warmth and glory, flows from GOD into our veins. We take fire in the depth of our being and the spiritual taste impregnates soul and body, — both the taste and the desire, — and the likeness of His virtues is reproduced in us. He lives in us and we in Him; He gives us His Soul with that plenitude of grace by which man perseveres in charity and in the praise of the Father.

I bless Thee O LORD my GOD Who hast granted the desire of my heart! For Thou hast given me Thy holy Sacrament the source of my rapture, Thy Body my salvation! Thy Body my joy! Not to eat this

heavenly manna is to be already dead. It is the Bread of Angels, and the secret of wisdom is to know how to relish it. The world does not possess this secret; it finds its joys and sorrows far away from God.

Thou didst promise, LORD, that we should eat together: from that day forth my mouth has been open, and I am withered up with longing, for I can never exhaust Thee. The more I eat the more I hunger; the more I drink the greater is my thirst, and that which remains to me is more than the universe is able to consume.

Thou art, O LORD, a liberal host: Thou renderest again whatever has been spent for Thee. I drink with rapture this life-giving Blood, — this Blood which flows from the glorious Wounds! Its sweetness is ineffable; I am well nigh inebriated, and I cannot conceal it. Behold my vessels; — fill them! I hunger amid my treasure. Whatever Thou mayest bestow upon me,

that which I possess appears little, that which escapes me is what I long for! My desire follows and pursues; but the finite can never attain to the infinite. Nevertheless though there remains an invincible diversity between us, the LORD Jesus promises and shows us the eternal fruition of His divinity. There are persons who have an experimental knowledge of God. Is it any wonder if joy completely breaks them down?

Scripture says of the Queen of Saba, that when she saw the riches of Solomon, his splendour, and his glory, she had no spirit left in her; she was transported out of herself; and what was the poor little glory of Solomon compared to the glory which the Blessed Sacrament prepares for us,—the glory which is Jesus Christ? Whatever concerns His Humanity we can receive to a certain point without losing our spirit, but when we feel His Divinity admiring won-

der lifts us above ourselves and our strength fails us before the altar of the LORD, overwhelmed by the splendours and tyranny of love. For love draws its object forcibly into itself: we draw Jesus into ourselves; Jesus draws us into Himself, and there devours us. Then we grow in stature; and carried above ourselves, above reason, into the interior of love, we devour spiritually. This immense love burns and consumes us and our spirit, and draws us into the unity where beatitude awaits us.

Always to eat, always to be eaten; always to ascend, always to descend; that is our eternity! This is what Jesus meant when He said to His disciples, "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you".

XIV.

THE EFFECTS OF LOVE

Humility and Thanksgiving.

What is Love in itself? No one knows any thing about it but some of its effects are known.

The Eternal Love sheds abroad light and grace in all the powers of the soul: hence are the virtues. The grace of God touches and moves the higher forces: — thence flow charity, light, love of justice, adoration of the divine plan discerning and active; thence fidelity superior to images, victory without fatigue and that sublime inanimation, at the same time active and fruitful, by which a man rises above

himself into the unity of the spirit. Love gives more than we are able to receive and exacts more than we are able to give. Its requirements are like a devouring fire: the body shares the impatience of the soul; the spirit burns with a consuming eagerness. This panting avidity recollects the spirit in the simple peace of the deep.

The spirit comes in contact with our spirit and says to it in the depth; 'love me as I love thee, — as I have loved thee eternally'. Now this voice, this prayer, this interior demand is so terrible to hear that our spirit is utterly overthrown by the tempest of love; and all the powers of the soul, shaken and trembling, turn to each other asking, 'do we indeed love the eternal Love, — the Love inexhaustible?'

When a man considers in the depth of his heart the immensity of God and His faithfulness; when he reflects on His Es-

sence, His love, His benefits, which add nothing to His beatitude, and looking on himself proceeds to count up his offences against this infinite and faithful LORD, he turns against himself with such indignation and contempt that he knows not how to give expression to it or to despise himself sufficiently.

He feels that the contempt which he deserves is greater than that which he is able to conceive. The best thing which he can do in this difficulty is to complain to GOD, his LORD and his Friend, of the weakness of his self-contempt, unable to place him as low as he desires.

Sin is so terrible an evil that neither to attain any conceivable good, nor to avoid any possible ill, is it allowable to commit one single sin mortal or venial. But we have committed many. How is it that we can contain ourselves? that we do not melt and fail with adoring love when

we plunge into this abyss of mercy, the eyes of our soul bring open to the truth that God has taken away our sins? He has restored friendship with His enemies; how is it that we do not melt away?

Truly, the creation of the world, drawn from nothingness, is a small thing compared with pardon! But this is not all; the LORD, in His clemency, has willed to turn our sins against themselves and in our favour. He has found the means of making them of service to us, and of converting them into instruments of salvation in our hands. Let not this truth diminish our fear of sin, or our grief at having been guilty of it: but sin has brought us to penance it has become for us a source of humility and love.

It is important however to observe that there is a source of humility much higher than this. The Blessed Virgin Mary, conceived without sin, possesses a more

sublime humility than Mary Magdalen. The latter was pardoned, the former was guiltless; and this absolute immunity, grander than all pardon, caused a higher thanksgiving to ascend from earth to heaven than did the conversion of Magdalen.

Humility, says Gilbert, has such a tendency towards the depths that it cannot rest till it has got to the bottom, which is the abode of joy. The bottom of the abyss is the absence of all spirit of inordinate appropriation; but so long as we are in this world we have always something of which to dispossess ourselves, some garment to lay aside. Humility, like charity, is always capable of increase; we must therefore ever seek to reach a lower depth.

To be plunged in humility is, it seems to me, to be plunged in God; for God is below the abyss, above all and beneath all. When we are so profoundly lost in God that giving to Him or receiving from Him becomes

one and the same thing to us, then we begin to be content with our impotence.

Since a fundamental humility is the pure and solid vessel capable of receiving grace, and into which alone GOD wills to pour it forth, I earnestly conjure you to be humble.

Humility is so precious that it obtains things too great to be expressed. Every ascent has humility for its condition and law. He who possesses a good foundation of humility does not need many words for his instruction; GOD teaches him more than he can make known to others. Such men are the disciples of GOD.

Humility gives birth to liberty and confidence. The liberty which grows along with humility exalts man's powers into thanksgiving; but if the humble man had a power of praise greater than that of all creatures put together, it would still be insufficient in his eyes. He could never place GOD high enough or himself low

enough; but here is a marvel; — this impotence turns into wisdom, and the very insufficiency of his act becomes the chief happiness of his life.

Among those things which can never be worthily expressed or extolled, let us not forget the ineffable dignity of Mary conceived without sin. She addressed her prayers to her God, and her commands to her Son. She was profound in her humility, sublime in chastity, immense in charity, while by patience and condescension towards sinners and suppliants she attained to a degree incommensurable. Mother of all grace, clemency and mercy; Advocate and Mediatrix, she asks and God refuses her nothing, for it is His Mother who asks; the Queen crowned along with Him, seated at His right hand. Exalted above all creatures she is nearest to God. We should render thanks to God for the incomprehensible dignity of His Mother, and for the communications

of joy which flow therefrom upon all humanity.

We must not forget that thanksgiving is the first act of the creature, and that this act will endure as long as eternity. When Michael and his angels fought against Lucifer and his angels, the latter were cast down like lightening; for he that exalteth himself shall be abased; while the former began the eternal act of thanksgiving, and all the choirs of angels who remained faithful intoned the hymn which will never end, praising God for their victory, because He is their God and His love as eternal as His glory and their joy.

XV.

UNITY.

Unity is a force which attracts towards its centre everything to which it has given birth, naturally and supernaturally. Unity, considered in itself, dwells above the acts which are accomplished by it; but all the powers of the soul, at the highest point of their operations, receive power and virtue when they touch this origin, this source, which is the very essence of the spirit. It is in this unity that the human spirit acquires the divine likeness by grace and virtue, or unlikeness by mortal sin.

The divine likeness is daughter of the deiform light, without which supernatural union is impossible.

There exists in us a certain natural image of God; it is a kind of shadow of unity, a likeness which can never be effaced but which is wholly insufficient. Without the likeness which comes from grace eternal perdition awaits us. As soon as God sees us apt to receive His grace, His gratuitous goodness is ready to confer this gift which bestows upon us His likeness. Our aptitude for the reception of grace depends upon the rectitude of our inward movement towards Him.

At the very instant of our movement Christ comes to us with or without intermediary; that is with His gifts or above them. We, on our part, cast ourselves into Him and towards Him, with or without intermediary; that is with our powers or above them.

Now He Himself bringing us His gifts and giving Himself to us, imprints upon us His likeness, absolves and delivers us. At the moment of our deliverance the spirit plunges

into the enjoyment of love. This is the meeting, the supernatural union without medium in which beatitude consists.

To give is natural to GOD, whose characteristic is love and gratuitous goodness; but to us, in our quality of human beings, to receive is accidental: strangers as we are and unlike, a force superior to nature is required in order to bring us to likeness and union.

This meeting, this unity which the spirit of love pursues and possesses in GOD without medium, exceeds and surpasses all intelligence, unless, going out of itself, it has followed the light thither where all is simple.

The fruition of unity transports us into a peace above ourselves and all things. From this source flows all good, natural and supernatural; but the spirit of love reposes above all good, in its source. In this unity we are received by the Holy Ghost, we receive the Holy Ghost, and with Him the

Father and the Son, for the Divinity is incapable of division.

Now the spirit, eager to enjoy, and seeking repose in GOD above images, obtains and possesses above nature in the essential existence all that it possessed naturally. This is the universal experience of the Saints; but they go through life without understanding or appreciating the nature of their happiness, unless they have found in their own depth deliverance from creatures and illumination of spirit. Pure love makes the spirit simple, and the man who is given up to these has obtained freedom from the creature.

In the very moment of his conversion man is laid hold of, in the summit of his spirit, by the hand of GOD to be transported into the eternal peace.

He receives along with grace, a certain divine likeness in the innermost depth of his powers: this is the principle of all his

future greatness. Now of this likeness, safe-guard of the peace of unity, he can never be deprived except by mortal sin.

When the contemplative has made his way up towards his eternal type; when by the way of the Son he has reached the bosom of the Father, then, illuminated by divine truth he receives hourly a divine birth, for he resembles the light. Something ineffable, like the¹ embrace of GOD places him upon the heights of beatitude. Men of the light are freely rapt above reason into the domain of vision. There it is that the divine Unity dwells and calls to them. Their bare look, empty and free, penetrates the activity of all creatures through and through; and this simple look

¹ Only that foretaste of future blessedness which is sometimes enjoyed here below as a gratuitous gift of GOD; the "naked vision" spoken of in the following sentence must not be confounded with the Beatific Vision.

is suffused with light as the air is filled by the rays of the sun. The bare will is transformed by the eternal love as fire by fire. The bare spirit awakes, feeling itself embraced, established, fixed, by the immensity of the GOD without form. Thus above reason the created image is united by a triple tie to its eternal type, the principle and source of life.

XVI.

DAY-BREAK.

When, in the essential peace, love has bestowed upon us the gift of unity, I behold the dawn of super-essential contemplation, and a corresponding manner of feeling beyond all power of expression. This is secret of living in death and dying in life, immersed above ourselves in the super-essential joy.

The action of GOD in us does not confer upon us unity of Essence with Him, or unity of Nature, but unity of Love. Nevertheless we are blessed; we are one beatitude in His divine Essence, when GOD rejoices in Himself and in us, amid infinite love

and the sacred darkness of the boundless night. Now this dark night is the light inaccessible, in which GOD dwells and rejoices in Himself, in the beatitude essential to Him super-essential to us. By virtue of love we are plunged and absorbed in His bliss; we lose ourselves in it; not as to our substance, but as to the feeling of joy. The Love of GOD and our love are melted into the same happiness when His spirit has absorbed our love into its essential beatitude. In speaking of union between GOD and man, I have said, and wish to repeat that there is no question of unity of nature or of essence, but unity of love.

The Being of GOD is uncreated; the gulf is impassable, the distinction eternal. We lose ourselves as far as the transports of joy are concerned but if we lost ourselves as to the substance, if we were to be annihilated, in a certain sense of the word, we should be incapable of beatitude. We live

in ourselves by love, we die in GOD by joy: it is a living death and a dying life, for we live with GOD and die in Him. Blessed are the dead who live and die this life and this death; heirs of the LORD and His Eternal Kingdom.

I entreat you all to pray for those who have been my teachers; for all who have laboured or written for my instruction. Pray in your inmost souls, in the truth, for all who shall hear me or read my writings. Oh! may they all be the elect of the great eternity where they will praise the LORD for ever! May Jesus Christ give unto us the everlasting glory and crown! There is the life which will never end, and joy unfailing, and the possession of God. Unknown splendours, the light of the eyes of Jesus, wonderful voices, nameless harmonies! To exult for ever; to be out of ourselves by an eternal rapture! To see the face of the LORD, the infinite Beauty

and thence to draw joy and glory! To be free: to fear nothing, to dare all! To reign with GOD, placed by His Hand on an eternal throne; free to attend exclusively to the Eternal Love, and to remain for ever in Him! Let us love another, that we may obtain His grace and enjoy His intimacy. Let us serve Him, let us obey; for GOD is not only very powerful, but He is All-powerful in the Trinity of Persons. He is truly worthy of an eternal love; He is worthy of eternal praise, and blessed are they who hunger after Him.

Oh! that the day might come! The day of supreme longing; the day of supreme love; in which eternal hunger will be eternally satisfied, and we shall be plunged in bliss; the joy that will never end! Amen! Amen! Oh! that every creature had a voice to cry Amen! Amen! Amen!

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